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Chairman: Mr. Manczyk (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Poland)
Acting Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Saha

Contents

Agenda item 125: Programme planning (*continued*)

Report of the Committee for Programme and Coordination (*continued*)

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on proposals on the strengthening and monitoring of programme performance and evaluation

Agenda item 127: Pattern of conferences (*continued*)

Agenda item 129: Human resources management (*continued*)

Composition of the Secretariat (*continued*)

Amendments to the Staff Regulations (*continued*)

Amendments to the Staff Rules (*continued*)

Study on the availability of skills in local labour markets for which international recruitment for the General Service category takes place (*continued*)

Review of the headquarters agreements concluded by the organizations of the United Nations system: human resources issues affecting staff (*continued*)

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In the absence of Mr. Ashe (Antigua and Barbuda), Mr. Maneczyk (Poland), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 9.35 a.m.

Agenda item 125: Programme planning (*continued*)

Report of the Committee for Programme and Coordination (continued) (A/60/16 and Corr.1; A/C.5/60/11)

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on proposals on the strengthening and monitoring of programme performance and evaluation (A/60/73)

1. **Mr. Kulyk** (Chairman of the Committee for Programme and Coordination) said that he wished to add some comments to what had been said the previous week by the Vice-Chairman of the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) in introducing the report of that Committee (A/60/16 and Corr.1). He reminded the Fifth Committee that the General Assembly had also allocated agenda item 125 to the Second Committee, in accordance with resolutions 57/282, 58/269 and 59/275, for its consideration of and appropriate action on sections C.1 and C.2 of chapter III, concerning evaluation, of the report of CPC on the work of its forty-fifth session.

2. In its consideration of evaluation issues, CPC had emphasized the importance of the contribution of the relevant intergovernmental bodies, the General Assembly and its Main Committees. As stated in paragraph 176 of its report, the Committee had reiterated its view that the relevant intergovernmental bodies, the Economic and Social Council and the Main Committees of the General Assembly should include in their programmes of work a review of the recommendations of CPC relevant to their work and take appropriate action. The comments and observations of the Second Committee on the sections of chapter III that had been allocated to it had been transmitted to the Fifth Committee and issued as document A/C.5/60/11.

3. The Committee's 2005 session had been active and thought-provoking. Since the presentation given by the Vice-Chairman of CPC had focused mainly on programmatic and budgetary issues, he would concentrate on the recommendations made by that Committee on the review of efficiency and coordination questions, as well as on some issues on which the Committee had been unable to reach agreement on substantive recommendations.

4. The Committee had reviewed the report of the Secretary-General on the progress and impact assessment of management improvement measures (A/60/70) and had encouraged the Secretary-General to develop further an approach conducive to a genuine improvement of United Nations management, taking due account of the Organization's realities and needs. CPC had also recommended that the appropriateness of continuing to consider that agenda item should be reviewed, taking into account relevant General Assembly resolutions.

5. The Committee had considered the annual overview report of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination and had expressed its support for the high priority that the Board attached to ensuring effective and coordinated United Nations system support for Africa and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), and had requested the Board to ensure that support for NEPAD remained a priority of the United Nations system. CPC had underscored the existing inter-agency mechanisms to coordinate the fight against hunger and poverty and had recommended that the Board should include in its next annual overview report information on the obstacles, problems and needs encountered by those mechanisms. CPC had also recommended that the transfer of assets of illicit origin and the return of such assets to countries of origin should be added to the list of specific areas identified for joint work in the report, and had noted the need to tackle the problem of transnational organized crime and its causes.

6. CPC had considered the overview of the series of reports on managing for results in the United Nations system (A/59/617), which summarized reports of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) on the implementation of results-based management in the United Nations organizations, the delegation of authority and accountability, and managing performance and contracts. In that regard, the Committee had recommended endorsement of the benchmarking framework proposed by JIU.

7. In accordance with the relevant decisions of CPC and the General Assembly, the issue of improving that Committee's working methods had been given high priority. The Committee reviewed relevant extracts

from its reports on its thirty-eighth to forty-fourth sessions, as well as the various proposals put forward by delegations. There had been an interesting exchange of views on working methods which might lead towards substantial improvement in the procedures and effectiveness of the Committee. However, lengthy negotiations on the matter unfortunately had not resulted in agreed recommendations. He hoped that, by building on the work done during the session and acting in a spirit of flexibility and compromise, the Committee could make progress on improving its working methods by continuing the negotiations at its next session, with a view to adopting recommendations that not only were practical and realistic but also acknowledged the different cycles of CPC in budget and off-budget years. "Business as usual" was not an option for the Committee, but far-reaching proposals, even those that stemmed from relevant General Assembly resolutions, needed time to be evaluated and implemented.

8. The circumstances in which CPC had adopted its final report at the end of its forty-fifth session had demonstrated the need for a clear and agreed interpretation of the rules relating to adoption without a vote and adoption by consensus. He urged delegations to consider how the impact of existing discrepancies in the interpretation of such rules could be alleviated.

9. **Ms. Ahlenius** (Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services), introducing the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) on proposals on the strengthening and monitoring of programme performance and evaluation (A/60/73), said that the report had been prepared in response to General Assembly resolution 58/269. The report reflected the results of over a year of consultations among the members of a Secretariat-wide Working Group on Monitoring and Evaluation, which had been established to develop specific proposals for strengthening monitoring and evaluation within the Organization. JIU had reviewed the Working Group's final report and had concurred with the findings and recommendations; its comments were included in the report.

10. The report had concluded that, despite recent progress, the current monitoring and evaluation system in the United Nations required improvements if it was to have a noticeable effect on the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and impact of the Organization and on its future plans and decisions. The report also stressed that, in order to achieve better use of monitoring and evaluation findings, the roles of the three main stakeholders (intergovernmental bodies, OIOS and the senior managers of the Secretariat) must be clarified and their responsibilities enhanced. As the General Assembly had emphasized in its resolution 59/275, programme planning, including monitoring and evaluation reports, should be considered and discussed by the plenary and Main Committees of the General Assembly and by other intergovernmental bodies. That required that the format and content of performance and evaluation reports should meet the standards and needs of intergovernmental bodies and should be appropriate to the realities of operational decision-making in Secretariat bodies.

11. Since her appointment as Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services, she had concluded that the OIOS functions of monitoring, evaluation, audit and investigation would benefit from an independent external review aimed at clarifying the identity and value of those functions and helping the Secretariat to assess how they should be resourced and structured. Lastly, as the report indicated, the existing results-based management concepts, tools and techniques needed to be updated and improved. Accordingly, a new version of the Integrated Monitoring and Documentation Information System (IMDIS), the database that underpinned the results-based management system, needed to be developed in consultation with users to increase its utility as a management and monitoring tool. In that connection, funding for the continued functioning and development of IMDIS would need to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

12. **Mr. Longhurst** (United Kingdom), speaking on behalf of the European Union; the acceding countries Bulgaria and Romania; the candidate countries Croatia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; and, in addition, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and the Republic of Moldova, said that a number of members of the European Union had participated in the forty-fifth session of CPC as members or observers and had contributed to some of the outcomes. The European Union considered that a number of the conclusions and recommendations in the CPC report did not live up to the OIOS and JIU

recommendation that CPC recommendations should be action-oriented and should enhance the relevance, usefulness and effectiveness of United Nations programmes and subprogrammes. The Union was also concerned about what was not included in the report: recommendations on the working methods of the Committee, which had been discussed several times both by CPC and by the Fifth Committee. Despite the issue's high priority, CPC had again failed to agree on any conclusions or recommendations on its methods of work. The Union also believed it was time to consider whether or not the travel and subsistence allowances for CPC members, which had originally been authorized on a trial basis in 1978, should be continued. It would take the matter up in the context of discussions on the proposed programme budget.

13. General Assembly resolution 41/213, which provided guidance on procedural matters concerning CPC, specified that it should reach decisions by consensus. The absence of consensus on working methods and the procedural confusion that had characterized the end of the CPC session were regrettable and had led a number of Member States to reconsider their membership of the Committee. The European Union therefore felt that, in the circumstances, the appropriate step would be to take note of the report of the forty-fifth session as a whole.

14. The Secretary-General, in his report on the implementation of decisions from the 2005 World Summit Outcome (A/60/430), had recommended that CPC should reschedule its consideration of the proposed strategic framework to August/September 2006. In that connection, the European Union believed that CPC must demonstrate its capacity to provide action-oriented, relevant and useful recommendations.

15. Turning to the report on the strengthening and monitoring of programme evaluation (A/60/731), he thanked OIOS and JIU, and particularly welcomed the fact that programme managers would in future be asked to conduct preliminary performance assessments in the last quarter of a biennium and use them as a reference for formulating the subsequent proposed strategic framework. The European Union felt that it was important to understand how well programmes were performing when planning for the next programme period. It looked forward to hearing more in the future on the implementation of the plan of action for strengthening monitoring and evaluation, contained in the annex to the report.

16. **Mr. Hillman** (United States of America) said that since 1974, when his delegation had first become a member of CPC, it had relied on that Committee to ensure that the programme and budget aspects of United Nations activities were carefully scrutinized to minimize and eliminate duplication, overlap and inefficiencies. The progress that had been achieved in promoting results-based budgeting and programme evaluation was at least partly attributable to the work of CPC. His delegation was therefore very concerned to note that at the forty-fifth session of CPC a dispute had arisen over the reform of the Committee and the improvement of its working methods. Proposals to institute constructive improvements in the functioning of CPC had been rejected by a number of delegations.

17. As a result of the Committee's failure to carry out the mandate of the General Assembly to improve its working methods, his country had declined to approve the CPC report. Although his delegation had clearly stated that it could not approve the report as drafted, the Chairman had ignored its objection and declared the report to have been adopted. That was a clear violation of the requirement of General Assembly resolution 41/213 that the Committee should reach its decisions by consensus. In addition, the attempt by his delegation to have its position reflected in the report had been rejected. Thus, his delegation was not currently in a position to endorse the Committee's report.

18. In the context of the collective consideration of the decisions taken in September by the Heads of State and Government concerning the need to reform the United Nations, his delegation underscored the critical importance of having a centralized coordinating mechanism to guarantee efficiency in the United Nations system's approach to the numerous problematic issues it currently faced. In view of the dysfunctional nature of CPC, his delegation concluded that it was not the body to carry out that important task.

19. **Mr. Kozaki** (Japan) said that, in the view of his delegation, the work of any entity should be evaluated in terms of its actual results and impact rather than in terms of the original lofty intentions. The forty-fifth session of CPC had ended in disappointment and without a sense of accomplishment, as CPC had again failed to meet its own standards or the mandates set by the General Assembly. Paragraph 12 of General Assembly resolution 31/93 had referred to CPC as "the

body whose central role and overall responsibilities are recognized", but he doubted whether that description was factually correct under the current circumstances. Thus, the special exception in respect of CPC should be discontinued with regard to the basic principle governing the payment of travel and subsistence allowances, as set out in paragraph 2 of General Assembly resolution 1798 (XVII). His delegation would welcome suggestions on ways of improving the relevance of the work of CPC.

20. Turning to the OIOS report on proposals on the strengthening and monitoring of programme performance and evaluation (A/60/73), he said that his delegation welcomed the proposals made in the report and was ready to discuss ways of strengthening the Organization's evaluation mechanisms.

21. **Ms. Zobrist Rentenaar** (Switzerland) said that her delegation shared many of the concerns raised by previous speakers and agreed that the 2005 session had not been very productive. Not only had members wasted valuable conference resources in lengthy debates over the programme of work, but CPC had failed once again to achieve even the most tentative reform of its working methods, despite nine rounds of informal consultations to consider a number of very constructive proposals that had been made. In the broader context of efforts to reform the United Nations, it was particularly urgent to enhance the effectiveness and continued relevance of CPC. Although her delegation had been nominated by the Economic and Social Council for a further term as a member of CPC, it was currently reviewing its membership of that Committee in the light of recent developments.

22. **Mr. Yechury** (India) said that his delegation attached great importance to the role of CPC as the main subsidiary body of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council for planning, programming and coordination. CPC had become even more important for ensuring that the programmatic content of the budget conformed to legislative mandates, given the proposals that had been made for the wholesale deletion of mandated programmes through the instrument of the budget.

23. At its forty-fifth session, CPC had completed its full agenda creditably despite the severe constraints under which it had been put. One such constraint had been the loss of one week of the session on account of differences over its programme of work. That was doubly unfortunate as it had been entirely unnecessary. General Assembly resolution 58/269 had stated not that the Committee's programme of work would have to undergo a change, but that CPC should review the programmatic aspects only of new and/or revised mandates, as well as any differences that arose between the biennial programme plan and the programmatic aspects of the proposed programme budget. It had also requested the Secretary-General to include, in the introduction to the budget fascicles, information on the new and/or revised mandates approved by the General Assembly subsequent to the adoption of the biennial programme plan. As CPC itself had noted in its consideration of the budget documents, there were significant differences between the narratives of the biennial programme plan and the corresponding narratives in the budget fascicles.

24. Another issue to which the Committee had devoted considerable time and effort was that of improving its working methods. After four formal meetings and nine rounds of informal consultations, the Committee had been prevented from adopting recommendations on improving its working methods even though consensus had been reached on many recommendations. That had been justified by some on the grounds that consensus had not been reached on the proposals to which they had been particularly attached. However, those proposals had had less to do with improving working methods than with reducing the length and number of the Committee's sessions. The inevitable conclusion was that they had been more concerned with cost-cutting than with either improving the value of the Committee's output or making it more effective. That should be borne in mind before any conclusions were drawn about the inability of CPC to produce any recommendations on improving its working methods. His delegation was pleased, however, that despite initial obstacles, the report of the Committee had been adopted and had also been endorsed by the Economic and Social Council.

25. His delegation supported the recommendations of CPC on the proposed programme budget for 2006-2007 but noted that several sections of the budget had unfortunately not been issued in time for consideration by CPC. His delegation hoped that that would not occur in future.

26. Turning to the Committee's recommendations on the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), he said that his delegation supported in

particular the recommendation that the various components of the United Nations system should make greater efforts to work together to provide focused and coordinated support to NEPAD. The Committee had reiterated the central and critical role of the Special Adviser on Africa for the global coordination of support for NEPAD, and his delegation therefore noted with concern that the post of Special Adviser on Africa remained vacant. His delegation also endorsed the recommendation that the General Assembly should request the system to explore innovative approaches for funding the priorities and programmes of NEPAD.

27. In connection with the report of the Chief Executives Board for Coordination, his delegation was pleased that CPC had recognized the changing relationship between regular and voluntary funding in the various participating organizations of the Board and had emphasized that programme delivery should correspond to legislative mandates and that the impact of that changing relationship on management programmes and should be brought to the attention of the relevant legislative bodies.

28. **Ms. Taylor Roberts** (Jamaica) said that, as her delegation had already made a statement on behalf of the Group of 77 and China at the time of the presentation of the proposed programme budget, it had not intended to refer again to the CPC report. However, having heard previous speakers, she wished to respond to the statement that time had been wasted at the most recent session of that Committee. Even before that session had begun, proposals to halve the time allowed for the Committee's work had been insistently put forward. No delegation that understood the importance of CPC could have made such a proposal, and the way in which it had been made had contributed substantially to the waste of time. There was a need for greater appreciation of the important role of CPC in the planning and budgeting process. Under the previous chairmanship the Committee's working methods had been examined, and the matter should be studied again in order to ensure wider appreciation of the strategic importance of the Committee in terms of the objectives and priorities of the Organization.

29. **Mr. Elnaggar** (Egypt) said that his delegation wished to associate itself with the statements made by the representative of Jamaica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and by the representative of India. He recalled that General Assembly resolution 58/269 had provided for changes to be made to the planning, programming and budgetary process on a trial basis. However, paragraphs 13 and 14 of the resolution had clearly reaffirmed the programmatic role of CPC in planning and budgeting. Regrettably, in the introduction to the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2006-2007 (A/60/6 (Introduction)), the Secretariat had deliberately misinterpreted the purport of the resolution.

30. The report of CPC had been adopted by consensus. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 41/213, consensus was defined as the broadest possible agreement. When a vote was requested on a proposal, the consensus was deemed to have been broken. There had been no such request prior to the adoption of the report of CPC. Resolution 41/213 further stated that, while CPC should continue its existing practice of decision-making by consensus, explanatory views could be presented to the General Assembly. In that connection, he was grateful for the explanatory views that the Committee had just heard.

31. He noted with concern that reform was increasingly becoming a pretext for cost-cutting, with some delegations going so far as to propose the abolition of certain committees. His delegation shared the views of the representative of India in that regard. Lastly, in the context of United Nations reform, one of the previous speakers had alluded to the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of decisions from the 2005 World Summit Outcome for action by the Secretary-General (A/60/430). However, that document had no bearing on the current discussions. Moreover, reports must be formally introduced before any delegation could comment on them.

32. **Mr. Berti Oliva** (Cuba) said that his delegation had not intended to speak on the report of CPC. However, it would like the item to be kept open, so that it could make a formal statement in response to the comments made by some of the previous speakers.

33. **Ms. Lock** (South Africa) said that her delegation wished to associate itself with the statement made by the representative of Jamaica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. It also fully supported the statements made by the representatives of India, Egypt and Cuba. The recent discussions on United Nations reform had illustrated the importance of adhering to legislative decisions and aligning resources with the Organization's programmes and priorities. Her delegation therefore valued the work of CPC, which

provided Member States with a useful forum for interaction with programme managers and for the consideration of efforts aimed at enhancing programme delivery and coordination across the United Nations system and strengthening the intergovernmental aspects of monitoring and evaluation. CPC also served as an important link between the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the United Nations funds and programmes.

34. Her delegation wished to emphasize the importance of the intergovernmental nature of CPC in effectively discharging its functions, as set out in the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation and in the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly.

35. It was important to comply fully with General Assembly resolution 58/269 in order for the experiment undertaken with respect to the planning, programming and budgetary process to proceed smoothly and for Member States and the Secretariat to make a thorough and objective assessment of the benefits that the Organization might derive from formalizing it at a later date. Her delegation would expect CPC, as the only intergovernmental body charged with considering the biennial programme plan and the programme aspects of the budget, to provide the General Assembly with guidance on whether the experiment had facilitated the consideration of the budget and improved the alignment of programmes and resources. That would facilitate a final decision by the Assembly on the experiment's future.

36. Her delegation fully supported the observations and recommendations of CPC on evaluation and coordination questions. It appreciated the Committee's focus on system-wide support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), which was a good example of a programme requiring effective coordination across the United Nations system.

37. A number of delegations had stated that the report of CPC had not been adopted by consensus. However, the report had been adopted without a vote, and none of the delegations making those misleading statements had requested one. The Committee had followed the proper procedures. Her delegation was surprised at the attempts being made to reinterpret the term "consensus".

38. CPC should continue to consider ways of improving its working methods. Her delegation was ready to work constructively to that end and called on other delegations to do likewise. The proposals put forward must be aimed at enhancing the work of CPC, not undermining it.

39. **Mr. Torres Lépori** (Argentina), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group, said that the Group appreciated the work of CPC and fully supported the recommendations contained in its report, which had been endorsed by the Economic and Social Council. Argentina was represented on CPC, and his delegation could therefore confirm that the Committee's report had indeed been adopted by consensus.

40. **Mr. Sun** Xudong (China) said that China, too, was represented on CPC and attached great importance to its work. While the working methods of CPC could be improved, that was no reason to cast doubt on its value.

41. **Ms. Udo** (Nigeria) said that the observations made by the Chairman of CPC should be circulated in writing. Her delegation would make a formal statement on the report of CPC when that text became available, and wished the item to be kept open to enable it to do so. Her delegation took a close interest in that Committee's activities and working methods, especially as Nigeria had provided the immediate past Chairman of CPC. It fully supported the remarks made by the representatives of Switzerland, India, Jamaica, Egypt, Cuba and South Africa regarding the important contribution made by CPC, and it had listened with concern to those delegations that had called the Committee's role into question.

42. Her delegation agreed with CPC that the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination should continue to attach high priority to ensuring effective and coordinated United Nations system support for Africa and NEPAD. Given that high priority, it was perplexing that the post of Special Adviser on Africa remained vacant. The Secretariat should provide an update on the status of the Office of the Special Adviser.

43. The letter dated 20 October 2005 from the Chairman of the Second Committee addressed to the President of the General Assembly, which was contained in the annex to document A/C.5/60/31, demonstrated the importance attached by other intergovernmental bodies to the work of CPC. Her

delegation asked whether the Fifth Committee was required to take action on the letter.

44. **Mr. Yáñez** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that, while his delegation supported the statements made by the representatives of Jamaica and Argentina on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and the Rio Group, respectively, it wished to clarify its position on the meaning of the term "consensus". The existence of consensus depended not on whether or not a vote was taken, but on whether or not all delegations were in agreement. His Government had disagreed with certain proposals included in the 2005 World Summit Outcome. Clearly, there had been no consensus on the document, yet the Secretariat was already issuing reports on its implementation. In the case of CPC, a number of delegations had sought to impede the Committee's work. Further discussion of the meaning of "consensus" was needed. It was important to ensure that the adoption of documents reflected the outcome of a genuine debate concluding with genuine agreement among all delegations.

45. **Mr. Elji** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that his delegation wished to endorse the comments made by previous speakers who had emphasized the important role of CPC. The continuing attempts to weaken and undermine that body were regrettable. At the forty-fifth session of CPC, two delegations had prevented the Committee from reaching agreement on many issues. They had wasted the Committee's time by taking up procedural questions, and they were continuing to use those tactics in the Fifth Committee. The Fifth Committee was operating under severe time constraints and must focus on its consideration of the proposed programme budget; opening a debate on the meaning of "consensus" was not helpful to anyone. Lastly, his delegation supported the request for the item to be kept open.

46. **Mr. Abelian** (Secretary of the Committee), replying to the question put by the representative of Nigeria, said that, as in previous years, views and comments offered by other Main Committees would be reflected in the draft resolution on programme planning.

47. **Mr. Kulyk** (Chairman of the Committee for Programme and Coordination) expressed the hope that, in its negotiations on the item, the Fifth Committee would not waste time on general exchanges of views or on the reiteration of well-known positions, but proceed immediately to practical and substantive work. The negotiations should result in a consensus-based, results-oriented draft resolution that reflected the views of all delegations. A cooperative and flexible approach would be required, since no substantive results could be achieved without compromise. Most importantly, the Committee must attempt to preserve the understandings reached in informal consultations in the text ultimately adopted.

48. **The Chairman** said that, in the light of the requests made, the item would remain open and the Committee would revert to it at a later date.

Agenda item 127: Pattern of conferences (*continued*)
(A/60/32, A/60/93, A/60/112 and A/60/433; A/C.5/60/9)

49. **Mr. Horner** (United Kingdom), speaking on behalf of the European Union; the acceding countries Bulgaria and Romania; the candidate countries Croatia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; and, in addition, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and the Republic of Moldova, said that effective conference services were instrumental to the success of the work of United Nations intergovernmental and expert bodies. Since the resources allocated to those services represented a substantial share of the regular budget, his delegation set great store by their effectiveness, efficiency and quality.

50. The European Union was disappointed that the Committee on Conferences had been unable to make any substantive recommendations or agree on a draft resolution for transmission to the Fifth Committee. It deeply regretted that the body tasked with reviewing conference management and reform had itself been unable to complete its work on time. The General Assembly's treatment of the issue of conference management must be more efficient and policy-oriented.

51. The European Union fully supported the ongoing reform of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management and encouraged the Department to take proactive steps to move that process forward. It welcomed the results achieved to date and expected to see additional benefits in the near future on account of the increased use of modern information technology. However, the Secretary-General's report on reform failed to address the request

contained in paragraph 14 of section II.B of General Assembly resolution 59/265 for details on all options for the delivery of summary records and their practical and financial implications. In particular, no information was provided on the possible digitalization of summary records.

52. There had been enormous advances in information technology since the 1970s, when the current workload standards had been set, and he was surprised that those advances had not had an impact on the work of translators. In that connection, the Department should present a more reliable method for assessing workload standards than the one suggested in paragraph 62 of document A/60/93. The European Union would like to know whether any benchmarking exercises had been conducted with outside professional companies to ensure the continued relevance of decades-old workload indicators.

53. The European Union had taken note of the Secretary-General's proposals concerning the provision of interpretation services to meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States. However, since the current system of providing such services on an ad hoc basis had yielded good results, it should be retained. Lastly, the timely issuance of documentation was vital to the effectiveness of the intergovernmental process. While in theory the slotting system allowed for more accurate forecasting of when documents would be submitted and issued, in practice the system was being undermined by late submissions from author departments. The Committee should therefore consider alternative ways of addressing that problem, such as reducing the time frame for the issuance of documents from six to four weeks. Regardless of the Committee's eventual decision on the issue, programme managers must be held more accountable for the timely submission of documents.

54. **Mr. Diab** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that he appreciated the work of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, which, despite financial constraints, greatly facilitated delegations' work by producing documentation in the six official languages of the United Nations and providing interpretation services for meetings. In that connection, he underlined the multicultural nature of the Organization and the status of Arabic as one of the six official languages.

55. One delegation had proposed reducing the resources available for conference services and limiting the duration of meetings of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. That course of action was unacceptable, as it was designed to undermine the importance of the General Assembly and reinforce the hegemony of the Security Council, and would therefore limit the role of small and developing countries in the intergovernmental process.

56. He welcomed the useful and interesting report of the Committee on Conferences, but regretted that, owing to time constraints, the Committee had been unable to submit specific proposals and recommendations to the General Assembly. It was difficult to understand how certain delegations could criticize the Committee for its failure to agree on recommendations, yet refuse to grant it extra time to conclude its work. Similarly, he was bewildered by the call to eliminate the Committee on Conferences, particularly since it had an important oversight function. If Member States were genuinely committed to strengthening accountability within the Organization, the Committee should be retained and provided with the necessary means to facilitate the work of other United Nations bodies.

57. He welcomed the improved utilization of the conference facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi and said that conference services in Nairobi must benefit from the same treatment as those at other duty stations. He remained concerned about the delays in the application of information technology at that office, and called for further efforts in that regard. The high vacancy rates in Nairobi had become a chronic problem, particularly in the Arabic translation and interpretation services, and temporary assistance was not a viable long-term solution. In that connection, he pointed out that the Secretariat had not yet responded to the offer made by the Group of Arab States to assist in conducting an examination for interpreters and translators to fill vacant posts in Nairobi.

58. Translators and interpreters working into all six official languages must be of the highest calibre and should employ the most up-to-date terminology. In that regard, coordination between the interpretation and translation services should be enhanced in order to ensure that terminology was used consistently. Unfortunately, there had been a decline in the performance of interpreters, who, particularly when working on relay, sometimes failed to reflect meanings

or nuances accurately. Indeed, in some cases it had become undesirable to speak languages other than English at meetings, and urgent measures were needed to address that situation and identify those accountable for it.

59. With respect to summary and verbatim records, which represented the institutional memory of the Organization, he was concerned that concentrating précis-writing in the English Translation Service would have an adverse effect on the quality of summary records because of substandard interpretation at meetings. However, he welcomed the pilot project on setting a time frame for the issuance of summary records.

60. On the question of document issuance, he noted that the verbatim records of the meetings of the Security Council were not being issued within the time frame stipulated in the Council's provisional rules of procedure. That ongoing violation of the rules concerning the simultaneous distribution of documents was cause for concern because it undermined the principle of respect for the equality of all six official languages. Furthermore, the posting of parliamentary documentation on the Official Document System before it was issued in printed form constituted a violation of the relevant General Assembly resolutions.

61. He expressed support for the practice of holding informational meetings to discuss the improvement of the language services and, lastly, welcomed the Secretary-General's report on the reform of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management. He hoped that the integrated global management project would be fully implemented in the near future.

62. **Mr. Berti Oliva** (Cuba) reiterated the importance of the Committee on Conferences and, in that regard, echoed the concerns expressed by the representatives of China, Jamaica and Kenya at the Fifth Committee's 17th meeting and by the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic at the current meeting. While the Committee on Conferences had, in previous years, submitted a draft resolution to the General Assembly, its terms of reference established no obligation to that effect. Accordingly, the fact that the Committee had not submitted a draft resolution to the current session of the Assembly did not mean that it had failed to comply with its mandate and in no way justified its abolition.

63. In view of the ongoing difficulties surrounding the timely issuance of documentation, his delegation would like to know how the Secretariat was implementing the provisions of paragraph 9 of section III of General Assembly resolution 59/265. In addition, the need for compliance with page limits should be balanced against the right of all Member States to request the issuance of their communications in full as official documents. He asked whether the Secretary-General had complied with the request contained in paragraph 8 of section II.B of General Assembly resolution 59/265.

64. In closing, he recalled that, at the preceding session of the General Assembly, a number of delegations had asked why the informal survey on conference services had been distributed only in English and French and not in all six official languages. The same question had been asked about the most recent survey. If the Secretariat was genuinely interested in Member States' views on the quality of conference services, it should ensure that they had the opportunity to express their opinions in the official language of their choice.

65. **Mr. Nikitov** (Ukraine) endorsed the statement made by the representative of the United Kingdom on behalf of the European Union.

66. **Ms. Kane** (Assistant Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management), responding to a number of questions raised by Member States, said that the slotting system was fully operational in New York and was being introduced gradually in Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi. Approximately 50 per cent of the Department's workload in New York was slotted. Pre-scheduling consultations had been undertaken with all author departments and, as far as possible, requests for later slots had been accommodated. Force majeure situations had been fully incorporated into the system, and priority documentation, in particular that relating to budgetary matters for consideration by the Fifth Committee, had not been adversely affected.

67. Decreased performance in the area of document submission was due in part to a change in the procedure for re-slotting. During the main part of the General Assembly session, the Department came under additional pressure. For instance, in 2005, the Main Committees and the plenary had made a number of amendments to their programmes of work, but it had

been impossible to adjust the corresponding dates for document submission. As a result, some documents had been issued relatively late.

68. Turning to page limits, she said that the figures for 2005 were not encouraging. As at 15 August 2005, 23 per cent of all slotted documents had exceeded their page limit and 36 per cent had been submitted late. While there had been a marginal improvement in departmental compliance with submission deadlines since 2004, there had been no improvement in adherence to page limits. In addition, the number of documents that were both late and over the page limit had increased in 2005. To rectify that situation, the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management was continuing to urge author departments to follow the drafting guidelines contained in document A/58/CRP.7.

69. The Department was doing everything possible, within the framework of its mandate and in accordance with established practice, to provide conference services to meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States. Even without the provision of dedicated funds, better planning on the part of bodies in session and increased flexibility on the part of regional groups should enable the Department to service 90 per cent of such meetings. However, further improvements could be achieved only by modifying the Department's mandate and authorizing it to incur additional expenditures.

70. According to the available information, the utilization rate of the conference facilities at the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) had dropped. In that connection, the Department had requested ECA to provide updated information on how security considerations were affecting that rate. The Commission had confirmed that United Nations entities were permitted to host outside organizations at the conference centre, but experience had shown that such arrangements were rare.

71. The technical problems experienced during the videoconference with Nairobi were not linked to that duty station's information technology capacity; such problems also occasionally occurred during videoconferences with other offices. The Department for General Assembly and Conference Management routinely shared information technology projects and applications evenly among the offices in New York, Geneva, Nairobi and Vienna.

72. The high vacancy rates in the translation services were due to the large number of recent retirements and to mobility, which was encouraged by the Department in line with the Organization's overall human resources policy. In order to speed up promotion and recruitment the Department had begun to post multiple related vacancy announcements on the Galaxy system prior to the occurrence of the vacancies concerned.

73. The Department and the conference services entities in Geneva, Nairobi and Vienna continued to step up their recruitment and placement efforts to fill vacancies, particularly in the areas of translation and interpretation. Rosters of successful examination candidates were maintained in order to ensure a sufficient pool of candidates for recruitment at any time, and competitive examinations were held whenever the rosters were depleted. Experience had shown that because candidates on the rosters had strong preferences regarding the duty stations at which they wished to work, vacancies at duty stations such as Nairobi were hard to fill. Since the Department had experienced considerable difficulty in attracting Arabic interpreter candidates to Nairobi, it was considering alternative ways to encourage staff recruitment and movement. One option was to offer freelance candidates an 11-month contract in Nairobi. The possibility of organizing targeted examinations for less common language combinations or for specific duty stations had been discussed at length in the context of the integrated global management project. The assistance of Member States, including the Arab Group, in publicizing those examinations would be most welcome.

74. The backlog of summary records was due to several factors, including a change in the nature of meetings, many of which currently consisted of prepared statements read at high speed and requiring longer records, which in turn took longer to translate. There had also been an increase in the volume of documentation, which had taken up capacity that might otherwise have been used for the translation of summary records. Other factors were the successive cuts in the staffing levels of the translation services, which had reduced their overall capacity, and the decision to require the simultaneous distribution of all documents in all six official languages. Lastly, the translation of summary records had been suspended because of reductions in the Department's budget in the biennium 2002-2003.

75. The Department therefore proposed two measures. The first was to make summary records available to committee secretariats in the drafting language as soon as they were ready, so that they could be used as a reference for the drafting of the committees' reports and for other in-session documentation. The second was to issue all new summary records within three months of the date of the meeting. Should Member States find that time frame acceptable, the Secretariat could prepare a costing of the required resources for their consideration.

76. Another option was to increase the use of contractual translation as a long-term, sustainable way to ensure more timely issuance of summary records. That would require steps to address the shortage of capacity for contractual translation into Arabic, French and Spanish. Although the obvious solution would be to employ translation agencies, stringent United Nations procurement rules might slow the process considerably, and there would be additional costs involved.

77. The Department had not abandoned its work on workload standards. Its view was that the current standards should be maintained while work proceeded on a more comprehensive approach to performance measurement and management. However, it had taken note of the Committee's recommendations in that regard. The Department closely monitored the impact of new technology on the productivity of language staff and coordinated its efforts with those of other organizations, both within and outside the United Nations system, in the context of the International Annual Meeting on Language Arrangements, Documentation and Publications.

78. Turning to the issue of reducing the programme of meetings, she said that if the reduction was made by shortening sessions — i.e., by curtailing the number of fully serviced meetings per body by 5 per cent — some costs would remain unchanged, since planning for a 10-meeting session was identical to planning for an 8-meeting session. The reduced services would be strictly limited to meeting services assistants and interpretation. However, it was doubtful whether real savings would be achieved as a result, since most meetings were covered by a combination of permanent and temporary staff. If a decision was taken to reduce the meetings of all bodies by 5 per cent, temporary staff could be cut accordingly. However, the Department would lose flexibility as a result. If the reduction was made by eliminating full sessions, it would be necessary to analyse the reallocation of the work done by the bodies concerned to other forums prior to assessing the real impact on the Department's servicing needs. Although it was too early to make a final assessment of the Department's project on the integrated global management of conference services, supplementary information had been distributed to the Committee members.

79. Responding to comments about the informal survey on conference services, she said that the survey had been distributed to members in the two working languages of the Secretariat — English and French — because the requirement to issue documents in all six official languages did not apply to the survey and the Department lacked the resources to do so.

80. **Mr. Golovinov** (Russian Federation) said that Member States' views were the main criterion for assessing the quality of the work of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management. However, the Department could not obtain an objective idea of those views if it sought them in only two of the six official languages of the Organization.

Agenda item 129: Human resources management (*continued*)

Composition of the Secretariat (*continued*) (A/60/310; A/C.5/60/L.2)

Amendments to the Staff Regulations (*continued*) (A/60/365)

Amendments to the Staff Rules (*continued*) (A/60/174)

Study on the availability of skills in local labour markets for which international recruitment for the General Service category takes place (*continued*) (A/60/262)

Review of the headquarters agreements concluded by the organizations of the United Nations system: human resources issues affecting staff (*continued*) (A/59/526 and Add.1)

81. **Mr. Berti Oliva** (Cuba) said that his delegation agreed with the recommendations contained in the report of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) on the review of headquarters agreements (A/59/526) and that it

would seek clarification of the reservations expressed by the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination concerning recommendation 6, with a view to addressing them so that the recommendation could be implemented. His delegation fully supported recommendation 7, which was very important in view of recent delays in processing visas for staff and for the JIU inspectors themselves.

82. Turning to the report on the availability of skills in local labour markets (A/60/262), he asked whether the recommendation contained in paragraph 27, concerning the possibility of undertaking further study, indicated that the Office of Human Resources Management had doubts about the findings of the study referred to in the report. Paragraph 16 (e), on the recruitment campaign carried out in the local labour market, noted that advertisements had been placed in various newspapers circulated in the United States. Since the same approach had been used in the recruitment of the recently appointed Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management, he wished to know the underlying mandate for the procedure, what resources had been employed, the criteria used to select the newspapers concerned and, more specifically, whether the procedure in respect of the Assistant Secretary-General post had succeeded in identifying qualified outside candidates.

83. With respect to the Secretary-General's report on the system of geographical distribution (A/59/724), his delegation would have further questions regarding the various scenarios and variants presented, and wished to note that it had observed a decrease in the number of senior and policymaking posts occupied by individuals from developing countries. It would be grateful for information about the measures taken by the Secretary-General in response to the General Assembly's repeated requests that he should guarantee equitable representation at those levels, especially for developing countries.

84. **Ms. Udo** (Nigeria) said that her delegation would seek further clarification regarding certain recommendations contained in the report on the review of headquarters agreements (A/59/526). An updated version of the table included in the report might be useful. The report addressed certain issues that would require further discussion — at the appropriate level, because of their sensitive nature — in order to secure improvements that would optimize the terms of host country agreements and their implementation. One such issue was that of employment opportunities for spouses of United Nations personnel. In that regard, her delegation trusted that the Office of Human Resources Management would study the findings of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (A/59/526/Add.1) and explore ways to enhance conditions of service for the staff. With respect to recommendation 6, her delegation recalled the Board's comment to the effect that a "one size fits all" approach might not be applicable to host country agreements.

85. Her delegation would seek clarification and additional information concerning the report on the composition of the Secretariat (A/60/310), and would welcome a chart indicating regional representation in the Secretariat. Her delegation welcomed the section of the report dealing with separation of staff, and especially the forecasts of anticipated retirements for the period 2005-2009. In that regard, she wished to know how the Secretariat used that information with respect to ongoing recruitment, what measures were in place to ensure that by 2009 certain countries — particularly African countries — would continue to be represented in the Secretariat and whether Member States that might not be represented at all by 2009 were directly informed of that fact. Lastly, the African Group wished to reiterate its request for a chart indicating how many retirements of staff members from African countries were projected for the period 2005-2009.

86. **Mr. van Schalkwyk** (South Africa) said that according to table 12 of the report on the composition of the Secretariat, 80 per cent of departments were not meeting their targets for balancing geographical recruitment, 84.6 per cent were not meeting their targets for limiting recruitment from overrepresented States, and more than 50 per cent were not meeting their targets for increasing female representation among staff in the Professional and higher categories. His delegation therefore wished to know what measures were in place to ensure that those departments and their managers were held accountable for that underperformance. If no such measures were in place, his delegation would like to know why, and also what specific factors were impeding accountability in the Secretariat. His delegation would also be grateful to receive a table showing the number of Professional and higher-category posts occupied by female staff members from each of the five regional groups.

87. **Mr. Diab** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the report on the composition of the Secretariat (A/60/310) showed that his country was among the ones whose representation would be affected by retirements, and his delegation would therefore like to know the Secretariat's plans to prevent underrepresentation of States. Equitable geographical distribution was very important, especially at senior levels, but the representation of developing countries continued to decline. In particular, it seemed that nationals of developing countries were simply excluded from the most sensitive posts at Headquarters.

The meeting rose at 12.20 p.m.